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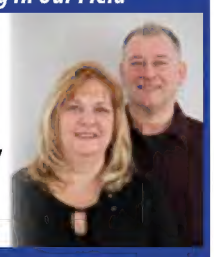
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March forward
Planning the season ahead on page 4

Dorset Snowball a hit
Celebrating the annual event on pages 10 and 11

Friendly flowers
Haliburton's florist expands on page 12

A white-breasted nuthatch perches on a branch, seeking food, hopeful that spring is on the horizon. /JILL MOULTON

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ISLA: *Tests*

I'M NOT THE bravest girl. Even though I just landed in Grade 6, I don't feel older. Changes worry me. Different classroom. Different teacher. I don't have my very own bestie any more, though there are two nice new girls in our class. But they're already choosing other kids in the schoolyard, at Gym time, on the bus, or when we make study groups.

DEB REED
Wind in the Attic

I've lived my whole life in this town. I've also been to Peterborough and Niagara Falls. Summers are for doing nothing. Winter's for TV. I watch all the Talent Shows. Maybe I'll audition one day. I should dig out that babyish karaoke machine I got last Christmas. I know every Taylor Swift song. I love her, even though my brothers don't. They only seem to like the classic rock Grandpa plays on his turntable.

I'm the youngest of four kids. The only girl. Even our dog Flex is a boy. Everyone's always too busy to hang with me. My parents work in their highway diner most days a week. They all like ice fishing and dirt bikes. I hate both, except for sometimes snowmobiling in our field on Dad's two-up Ski-Doo. I like staying on our property. I hardly go far since I'm a scaredy-cat. When I was three, I wandered off to chase a baby cottontail. Everybody searched for me. Overnight even. Police even. I couldn't find my way home through the bush around our road. Loads of trees had snapped in a spring ice storm and still blocked the trail. It was July, so I just curled up beside the creek, ate an old strawberry roll-up from my pocket, and used my arm for a pillow. So many mosquitoes! Grandpa rescued me the next morning. I heard him shout my nickname.

My real name is Isla. It's supposed to be pronounced *Eye-la*, but lots of people mess it up. It's

Scottish. Grandpa came from California. He headed to Canada in the 1970s because of some faraway war he wanted to avoid. My family calls me *Eye*. Kids at school know that too, but some play around with names, and it bothers me. First-timers call me *Izz-la* until I correct them. I'm tired of correcting. Why couldn't my parents have called me *Olivia*? Perfect name.

On Day Two of school, I had a chat with Miss Fields. She spotted me sitting on a bench with my recess snack. She sat beside me.

Hello, Eye-la. I love your name. I'm hearing it more these days.

She pronounced it perfectly. She also said that if she had a daughter, she'd call her *Isla*. She seemed to know that I once got lost. And she knew that my only best friend moved away last year.

Would you give the spelling dictation this Friday? Miss Fields asked.

Um…no, thanks. I answered.

How about marking them? she continued. *I'm asking everyone to help with tests. Like to go first? I'll show you how.*

I'll try, I said.

County Life

The following inserts are being distributed with County Life this week:

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Slush

WE ARE rapidly approaching that wonderful time of year when we find out whether the groundhogs we recently consulted are dirty little liars.

The answer is: of course they are. I mean how gullible do we have to be to think that critters who we routinely chase out of our vegetable gardens with rakes or misplaced bullets, are going to level with us?

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

Besides, I happen to believe we are asking them the wrong question. We ask if spring is going to come late or early. What we should be asking is how bad will the slush get?

That's something any hole-dwelling creature stays on top of.

For the outdoorsman and woman, this is perhaps the most important question of the season too. The answer is what determines whether we wear tall rubber boots or chest waders when we go out to retrieve the ice fishing hut.

It's always the latter for me, but only because I am short. But for the rest of you, this is very important information to get right.

If you really think about it, slush in spring is the bane of most outdoors enthusiasts – but only if you are on the receiving end of it. If you are the one who is displacing it, say from a fast-moving snowmobile or ATV onto a group of friends who lack even basic situational awareness, slush can be a lot of fun. Until they catch you.

(Pro-tip: don't let them catch you.)

Slush has other equally important outdoors uses too.

For instance, if you create a 20-foot-long slot in the snow near your ice fishing village and let the slush fill it in, you can have entertaining minnow races and could conceivably make a bit of money with off-track betting.

Slush also provides what can only be called a serviceable bath for your hunting dog.

Despite all this, most outdoors experts tend to disperse very little good advice on the subject. Even little things, such as the definition of slush are rarely discussed. (Basically, you can no longer call it slush after its depth exceeds your beltline. Or, if it is in your dog kennel.)

Not to brag, but I happen to be an expert on slush and its various outdoors uses, having spent more than 60 winters in and around it. OK, mostly in it. Aside from that, I am a collector of it, though my better half insists that I keep my collection in the garage.

All this is to say I am fully capable of presenting seminars on the subject should your club require it.

Mostly, I know that the smart outdoors enthusiast should do their best to avoid it. Again, no good has ever come from interacting with slush.

Yet here we are walking obliviously into the slushy season.

So, are there any real benefits of this uniquely Canadian resource? After all, we have the best slush in the world. (Think about that, tourism people.)

Well, slush is great if you can't afford an ice bath in a fancy spa. Also, it is one of the best tools in the outdoors for putting out fires – or incentivizing you to start them.

Also, there is nothing like a good icy puddle for letting you know you need to buy new footwear.

That, by the way, is why it's important to have a good slush fund.

Slow down on the busy

THERE ARE A Lot of competing pressures for our time and attention. And as I have said many times before, we can easily get caught up in the glory of busy.

TERESA JORDAN
Community Living Contemplations

We ask each other how things are going and the quick answer many times is: so busy.

In fact, last week I mentioned to a friend that I was noticing the beauty of the morning frostiness on the trees reflecting in the sun and the response was – you have too much time on your hands. So now we not only make busy glorious, but a hint of unbusy is now sometimes mocked.

What we know for sure though, is that we were not wired to live this way, to hear of extreme tragedies in B.C., to cheer on dozens of athletes on an app while working, to tackle hundreds of tasks while that app is on with work and then make our evening matter with more tasks and preparations, while listening to yet more information on a podcast or TV.

We, they say, are actually wired to rest when the sun goes down, unwind by the fire, leave time in the day to just think, and be with people laughing and telling stories, creating our sense of the world and self in relation to others. While I know that there is no going back to fires in the hearth and quiet uncomplicated evenings of rest, perhaps there are small things that we can start to change to make space.

What might happen if we tried for one or two weeks not to discuss how busy we are, but instead looked for something else, some kind of story that made a connection. We need to slow the busy and ramp up the living and being, together.

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Writing on the Senior Side

Goodbye February

GAIL STELTER
County Life Contributor

I must confess, I will not miss your cold and snow, but I will always celebrate the love of Valentine's Day and the family love of the Family Day Weekend. I will celebrate the love of friendships and the love of time you gave me for reading, writing, and watching our young, amazing Canadian athletes at the Olympics and of course, seeing my team win the Super Bowl. Wow, for a short month, February, you packed it in, and I loved it. Farewell, until next year.

It's still winter in Haliburton, but I am going to step high and march into March. I am going to find the fun and make it work. I hope you will join me. Sing a new song. Waddle in the puddles. Dance in the daylight. Laugh every single day. March usually marks the end of flu season, which is always good. March Break is often spring skiing that brings visits with kids and grandkids. Is this the year of your spring staycation? The sap will run, and delicious maple syrup will slide down your pancakes. There's St Patrick's Day when we are all Irish at heart. I have never had a green beer, and for a Kennedy, that may be unusual. This will be my year to give it a try.

I almost forgot March Madness. So many wonderful memories of our sons playing high school and university basketball and picking our teams for the tournament. Their favourite teams were Kentucky, Indiana and Duke. The memories last as they taught me to love basketball. Just last month, they texted each other to say that Indiana was playing Kentucky that afternoon. A year or two ago, my grandson got to go to a March Madness game in Orlando where his favourite team, Duke, was playing. There were shopping trips on our way to and from Florida to buy "official" basketball shorts, etc. We had a fun competition to see who made the best picks, and one year I loved cheering with Sister Jean, as her little school, Loyola, almost made it through. In my mom and grandma memories, March Madness is a cool reminder of family fun.

I do have one caution for the merry month of March. Do watch out for the "lion and the lamb' weather. I will always remember the March break sudden snowstorm in which a little brother got lost walking a short distance from the toboggan hill, and his big sister's bus trip to the National Girl Guide Headquarters in Toronto ended up with the bus stuck on the highway.

I know that for many of those living on the senior side, winter has made it difficult to achieve that happy senior life, and stepping high into March seems overwhelming. Perhaps it was not just winter that made this time difficult. Perhaps it was simply the condition of being a senior. We can do this. We can march into March and set aside the doldrums and feeling of isolation and being disconnected. I was interested to read the recent press release from the National Institute on Aging, dated January 20, 2026, which stated that Canadian seniors are feeling more disconnected and that loneliness and isolation are increasing. "Positive feelings about aging fell among people 50 and older, from 62 per cent in 2024 to 56 per cent last year, the steepest drop since the survey began." This doesn't seem so bad until you turn it around and state 44% of people are not positive about their senior lives, and I would guess if this statement were limited to those over 75 years old, it would be even higher.

I have written about isolation before and offered a few suggestions, so why is this media release getting my attention again? The survey results pointed to persistent problems: 57 per cent reported experiencing loneliness, and 43 per cent were at risk of social isolation, numbers that have not changed significantly. In addition, social engagement is declining: participation in social or recreational activities once a week or more fell from 39 per cent to 33 per cent

over the past year, with affordability the most significant barrier. "This year's survey shows clearly that too many older Canadians are feeling isolated, financially stretched and less optimistic about their future," said Mark Hazelden, Executive Director (Interim), National Institute on Ageing.

Here in Haliburton County, we have a wonderful organization called Aging as Community. We are all thankful for the many events and information they provide. Is there more we can do to combat isolation, loneliness and address affordability as being the most significant barrier to participation in social and recreational activities?

Let's look for and plan more free events and happenings for seniors. I also noted that the survey said seniors do not often want to make long-term commitments to activities. Okay, let's think about and plan more free financial events and those that are also free from long-term commitments. I know we already have these in our community, so perhaps the place to start is to highlight some activities seniors might like to do as you sing your new song. Here are a few of the many that are available.

Bringing seniors together for free coffee chats: Open Door at SIRCH on the last Friday of every month, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. "Coffee, conversation and Connection"

Bringing seniors together for free song and music:

Live Music at Poquito Loco (March 6 and 20, 2026): Live entertainment from 6 to 9 p.m. on Fridays

Gord Kidd & Friends at Hook, Line & Sinker (March 6, 2026)

Bob Goss & Bruce Bain at Minden Curling Club (March 6, 2026

Bring seniors together for storytelling and sharing their histories:

"The Accidental Canadian" - Telling Our Stories March 11, 2026, at the HHOA Fish Hatchery from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Gail Stelter's (that would be me) Book Launch and Story Sharing Afternoon on Sunday, March 8th, at 2 pm at the Haliburton United Church Hall.

As we dance in the daylight that stretches a little longer each day, we are marching forward to spring and anticipating the spring delights of new growth that are coming our way. Put on your happy boots and get marching.

Swan by Debi Ireland

Visiting deer by Debi Ireland

Peer support specialist joins Youth Wellness Hub team

THOMAS SMITH
County Life Staff

A new 2SLGBTQ+ peer support specialist has started at the Haliburton Youth Wellness Hub.

Carl Vossen, a graduate of Trent University's social work program has over five years of experience supporting marginalized youth in Ontario.

Driving two days a week from Peterborough, Vossen will be available to youth that need one-on-one support. Outside of individual sessions, Vossen will provide one-on-one peer support, resources to families, plan activities related to connecting with identity, conduct outreach at the high school, foster community, and offer relationship support.

New to Haliburton, Vossen has been settling in well.

"I think it is really beautiful," they said. "Even noticing Pride flags outside of local businesses, it's really heartening to see that pride and representation out and about in a small town. I know it can feel really isolating and lonely as a queer person in rural areas."

A cat parent, collage artist, avid reader, and VHS tape collector, Vossen says they were drawn to peer support due to its flexibility in supporting mental health and their personal drive to support 2SLGBTQ+ youth in rural communities.

"My number one goal is to increase opportunities for connection for 2SLGBTQS+ youth in Haliburton County," said Vossen. "To help youth feel less alone and to understand that their world can expand beyond their experience of the here and now."

Vossen says that in their position, they hope to be the person that they needed while growing up trans in a rural community. A space like the Youth Wellness Hub would have been life changing for them.

A new position to the Youth Wellness Hub, the peer support program is going to be built from scratch. As the work continues, Vossen will ask the youth what they are needing from the support specialist position.

"I can't do this work without youth input," said Vossen "I can't offer relevant services if I'm not in tune with the needs of the community."

With five years of experience in peer support, Vossen is no stranger to trailblazing their own 2SLGBTQ+ peer outreach program, improvising access for trans youth to receive gender affirming care, and improving quality of service in rural communities.

"It feels like this role was meant for me," said Vossen. "It is directly in line for what I am meant to be doing and I can make a difference here."

Mary Sisson, manager of the Haliburton Youth Wellness Hub says that the youth that visit the hub have been expressing the need for 2SLGBTQ+ in-person peer support for quite some time.

"It feels like home," said Vossen.

Currently, the Wellness Hub has Lindsay Meller, a nurse practitioner capable of offering gender affirming care, and Cicily Cooper, a new addition to the Haliburton Highlands Family Health , who is a practitioner that is committed to offering gender affirming care to the community.

Youth that grow up trans and gender nonforming in rural communities need to seek care in large urban areas. This involved several hurdles for youth including transportation, leaving their home support community, and long time expenditures. Rural doctors often are not aware of the resources or understand what is involved with gender affirming care. Vossen says that gender affirming care should not be considered specialized care.

"Often patients are put on really long waitlists by doctors that mean well, but are not versed in gender-affirming care," said Vossen. "They think they are doing what is best for the patient, but I find it disappointing because there are so many resources available for health care providers now to expand their knowledge in order to access care that is important."

"It is quite a journey to get there, especially the younger you are," said Sisson. "The younger you are, the longer you are on that journey."

Relationships, both platonic and romantic, are a huge part of the development of youth.

"A healthy relationship is one based in respect and trust," said Vossen. "It feels like one where you can fully be yourself without fear of judgement or shame, where you can express all of yourself and be met with love and empathy."

Some advice Vossen shared is to consider if your thoughts are heard, and if you can show up as yourself in a relationship.

A huge part of their peer support program is to connect 2SLGBTQ+ youth together and show them that they have a long future.

"It is impossible to envision a future for yourself if you don't know that people who share your experiences have survived and thrived before you," said Vossen. "That representation is essential."

One example of representation is at the popular Pride in the Highlands events across the county in August.

The growth of a youth's social circle can act as a direct antidote to the hurdles that 2SLGBTQ+ youth face.

"Finding community shows you that there is no singular right way to be trans or queer," said Vossen.

Carl Vossen, Haliburton Wellness Hub's new 2SLGBTQ+ Peer Support Specialist wants to create opportunities for connection for 2SLGBTQ+ youth in Haliburton County, make youth feel less alone, and support youth through their life journeys. Vossen will be available for peer support in Haliburton on Wednesdays and alternating Tuesdays and Fridays. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Developing a relationship with yourself, being authentic, and unapologetically embracing yourself are all lessons that cisgenedered people can learn from the trans community.

"I think rural queers are really underestimated," said Vossen.

With the challenges of growing up queer, Vossen says that it makes for more creative, resilient youth.

For those under 20, there is a 24-hour 2SLGBTQ+ youth support line that can be texted at 647-694-4275 or communicate online at youthline.ca

The phone number for the Trans Lifeline in Canada is 877-330-6366.

The Trans Peer Outreach program, offered by the Canadian Mental Health Association is available to those living in the Haliburton County area. More information about this program and how to sign up is available at cmhahkpr.ca.

Appointments can be made to discuss gender affirming care locally through the Haliburton Highlands Family Healthcare Team's website hhfht.ca.

Drop-in hours for the Youth Wellness Hub include Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Fridays from 3:30 to 5 p.m. They also offer drop-in services at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre every other Wednesday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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Sand

IT'S STILL winter, which means we are diligently grasping at straws for ways to keep our very busy toddler entertained indoors.

Don't worry, he's also an outdoors kid, but with severe wind chills and excessive snowfall, there's only so much outdoorsing a tiny human can do.

EMILY STONEHOUSE
County Life Editor

So that brings us back inside.

And we've really explored it all. I've thrown couch cushions on the ground to make an obstacle course (that lasted 12 minutes), we've baked cookies and filled up sensory bins (23 minutes, combined), I've even dabbled with a water table and extended bathtimes featuring extra bubbles (34 minutes, on a good day).

He's a busy boy. And I know that when summer hits, he will be finding his footing in the limbs of trees and the splash of puddles.

But now, we stick to the Great Indoors.

So on a particularly cold day, I was desperate for something to keep his mind and body busy, and through some digging in the black hole that is our basement closet, we found a bin.

It seemed like a regular old blue Rubbermaid bin. We have dozens of those. Mostly filled with quilts, towels, or seasonal footwear I continue to forget about until the appropriate season passes (sorry, husband).

But this one was heavy. We brought it upstairs to discover that it was filled with cars. Tiny metal Hot Wheels, John Deere tractors, vintage Oldsmobiles and Volkswagens appropriate for Polly Pockets.

My son was instantly drawn to them. They once belonged to my brother, my uncle, my dad. They have decades of play between the lot, and now, with the next generation landing keen eyes on them, will likely have decades more.

But it wasn't the cars that naturally had me reeling. While cars were not necessarily the go-to toy of my childhood, anything with my brother was still ranked near the top of the list.

And sometimes that included cars. I had a hot pink camper van that my mini figurines would squish into, a tractor trailer that carried wispy ponies to block-built farms.

Memories that were not significant enough to stand out in the day-to-day reminiscence that floats near the surface, but woven deeply into the existence of my being.

And through the cars and the memories, something stood out to me in that box.

It was dirty. It had a sealed lid, so it was not riddled with dust and mildew. Rather, all the little vehicles were softly coated with a fine film of sand.

Because the last time we played with those cars, it was outside, in the dirt. Somewhere on the property of my childhood home, likely on a sunny warm day. And while there was rife and rumble in the era for sure, it wasn't something that cast a shadow on my day. The world felt easier, felt simpler, and felt smaller in all the right ways.

And one day, we packed up those cars in the blue Rubbermaid bin, not bothering to shake off the sand, and we never opened them again.

Because life moves on. Childhood is only written in a few short chapters before life fills the pages and next steps are printed out.

Until it was discovered again. On a particularly cold day. By a kid seeking wonder and whimsy in a world that is already writing his chapters. And there's value in witnessing that sense of awe that comes with play, comes with imagination. A silver lining, in the sands of time.

Top 10 least successful butler names

WHEN I was young, I dabbled with the idea of being a butler. I possessed the basic talents. I could walk towards ringing bells and carry as many as two cups of tea. I'm also pretty good at answering doors and saying, "Yes …"

STEVE GALEA
Humour Columnist

Being a butler is a little more complicated than that, however.

It's a competitive field and many of them never find employment in the first place, because they chose bad butler names. Or so I assume.

Here are the top 10 worst names for those applying for jobs as butlers.

1. Peefurst
2. Buttswiggle
3. Fartsmoor
4. Snoozeton
5. Sneezewurst
6. Triphazzard
7. Butterfingers
8. Zipperlough
9. Kursefellow
10. Leekslittle

Window

Square of Sky, scribbles of crows, screeching as they
land in the bare crown of a tree,
its shadow painting Snow, as I peer out the window
with bleary morning eyes,
squinting at the shards of diamond light glinting in
the Snow, sunbeams sliding along the windowpane,
spilling onto the wooden floor where I slouch in a
puddle of Sun, still as the boulders of Snow
heaped along both sides of the road, the crows
interrupting my morning reverie,
cawing louder than my thoughts that scatter like
snow dust, swept by Wind past the window,
frost flowers blooming on the glass, like winter lace,
a shiver slithers through me,
though I sit in a puddle of Sun that warms my flesh,
wondering whether I should go Outside,
to walk through my patch of world, or hide inside
today, my limbs and chest feeling heavy as lead,
my body yearning to curl beneath the covers on this
blaring blue day, though it's barely begun,
the crows screeching in my head as I sneeze then
sneeze again, one last Hachooooo,
since things always happen in threes, and the
moment I think the thought, I blink up at the tree
where the pair of crows are joined by a third, and I
wonder what they are bickering about,
or maybe they just want to be heard, like the small
quiet voice burrowed deep inside me, that I don't lis-
ten to most days,
when it warns and nudges and offers clues out of
the blue when I don't know what to do,
but this morning I listen and obey, sneezing so loud
I drown the soft little voice that's gone away,
that implores me to stay indoors today, and bundle
up in bed with a mug of tea and a book
that will transport me to a different time and place
where the characters suffer hardships and loss
and don't have the luxury of cowering in bed when
their head feels stuffed with cotton batting and dust
and they sneeze and cough their way through the
day, and they survive to live the rest of their story
as it unfurls page after page, I uncurl my limbs and
rise from the puddle of Sun that floods the floor
with warmth,
wobbling over towards the window, to blot out the
blueness of the day, and muffle the screeches of crows,
still up there, perched in the highest branches of the
tree, relieving themselves of their ow
private burdens,
the glints of diamond light sparkling in the Snow,
catching my eye, soothing the weariness in my bones,
as I wheeze and sneeze, struck by the beauty of sun-
light stroking Snow, before long the shards of
diamond light
will be swallowed by shadow and the frost flowers
will melt, as if they were never there, bloomin
on the glass,
and I decide to leave the curtains open, so I can gaze
out the window from bed while I sip my mug of
soup or tea,
my eyes drinking in the blue Sky day and the scrib-
bles of crows when they decide to leave,
just wanting to be heard like the soft little voice
nestling inside me, that I smother with another sneeze.

Sylvie Kalenda

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jackiedhardman@gmail.com

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debra.lambe@gmail.com

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lynda@lyndalitwin.ca

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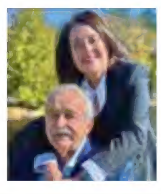

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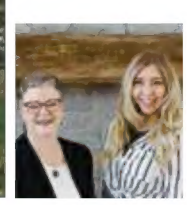

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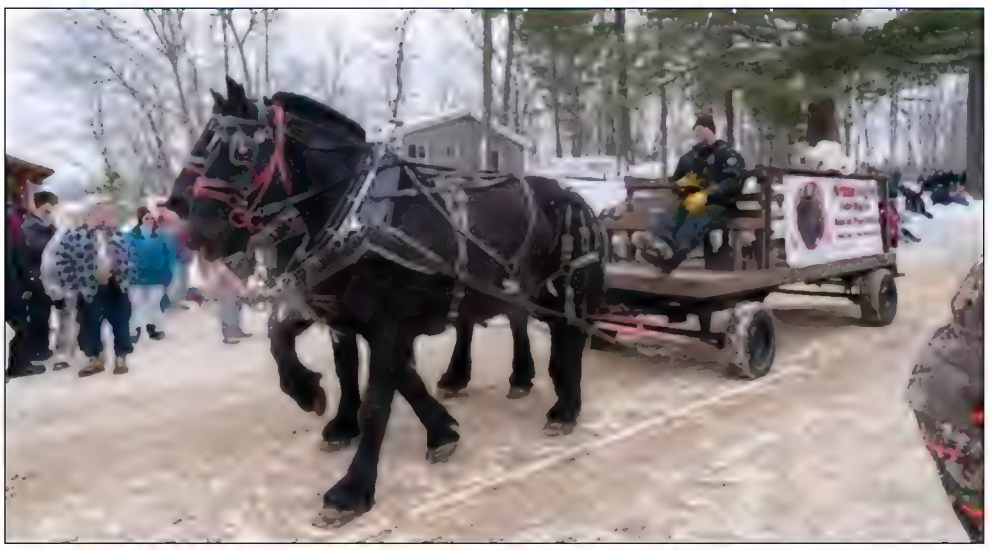
Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival

The annual Dorset Snowball Winter Festival was held over the Family Day weekend, with festivities falling on Valentine's Day. Despite cold weather, the yearly tradition saw hundreds of attendees, participating in a parade, wood carving, axe throwing, and a variety of wildlife experiences. Food, music, and entertainment made the event a sought-after destination over the winter weekend. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival



Legion Events

Branch 441 Kinmount

Monday: Bid Euchre 1 p.m.
Tuesday: Closed
Wednesday: Mixed Darts, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Closed
Friday: Bingo- Doors open at 5 p.m., play at 6:45 p.m. Supper specials every Friday starting at 5 p.m. May purchase special and eat in club room downstairs. Clubroom opens at 4 p.m.
Saturday: Clubroom opens at 3 p.m. Meat draw 5:30 p.m.
Special events:
3rd Thursday of the month 7 p.m. executive meeting and 7:30 p.m. general meeting (members only)
3rd Sunday of the month Ladies Auxiliary Meeting (members only)
Hall rentals available at reasonable prices. Call 705-488-3462 or 705-928-7105. We welcome everyone to our events and we look forward to seeing you!

Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Bridge 1 p.m. Schofield Rm. Youth darts 6:30 to 8 p.m. Clubroom 10 to 18 years of age. All are welcome, no experience necessary
Tuesdays: League darts 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Bid Euchre 1 p.m. start – Main Hall. Bingo doors open at 6 p.m. Bingo 7 p.m. FirstWed of each month with jackpot. Follow Facebook.com/Branch129 Bingo for the most up-to-date information
Thursdays: General Meeting third Thursday of the month, 6:30 p.m. All members urged to attend.
Ladies Auxiliary last Thursday of the month at 1 p.m.
Fridays: Five meat draw, five prizes each draw, first draw 4:30 p.m., last draw 6:30 p.m. Tickets $2 per draw. Paul Sisson, MC. Friday fun darts from 4:30 p.m. and onwards. 50/50 Draw 5:40 p.m.
Whether you're planning a function for 10 or 200, call Cheryl Waller at 905-447-7741, email haliburtonlegionrentals@gmail.com or visit haliburtonlegion.com. Everyone is welcome! Club room hours: Mon. 3 to 6 p.m., Tues. 3 to 9 p.m., Wed/Thurs. 3 to 6 p.m. Fri. 3 to 7 p.m.

Branch 636 Minden

Lunch - Monday to Friday
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week. Bid Euchre 1 to 3 p.m.
Tuesday: Food 5 p.m. Canoe FM Bingo 6 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1 to 3 p.m., Darts 7 to 9 p.m. and Euchre 7 to 9 p.m.
Every other Friday: Karaoke 8 to 11 p.m.
Friday Fish & Chips, Wings. Lunch 11a.m. to 2 p.m. and Dinner 4 to 7 p.m.
Saturday All Day Breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with three Meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541.
Schedules are subject to change without notice.
Check our Facebook page Minden Legion Branch 636 for more info.

Branch 624 Wilberforce

Hours - Sunday: Special Events Only, Monday: 7 to 10 p.m., Tuesday: Special Events Only, Wednesday: 2 to 10 p.m., Thursday: 2 to 6 p.m., Friday: 2 to 11 p.m., Saturday: 2 to 7 p.m.
Mondays: Darts $5/player 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Feb. 25 - Darts $5/player 2 p.m.
Quick Supper Menu changes weekly $10. 5 to 6:30 p.m.
Open Cribbage 6:30 p.m. – No need to pre-register
Thursdays: Feb. 26 HHHS Social Rec 10 a.m.
Fridays: Feb. 27 Wings and Jam Session $15/lb. 5 to 8 p.m.
Feb. 27 Community Care 55+ Lunch $20. noon
Saturdays: Feb. 21, 28 Meat Draw 3 p.m.
Feb. 28 Nacho Average Trivia 7pm. $5/Player
Call the Legion for more info 705-448-222

Snaffle and Mane marks three years with renovated storefront

ADAM FRISK
County Life Staff

For many, a third anniversary is cause for a vacation. For Gillian Taylor, owner of the local floral and plant shop Snaffle and Mane, it was cause for some coveralls and a sledgehammer.

Taylor recently hit her three-year milestone in Haliburton, and instead of bouncing off to Vietnam as originally planned, she spent her anniversary month gutting and renovating her 83 Maple Ave. storefront to better serve a community that she says has surprised her with its passion for "something a little different and elevated."

> ***You have to have a vision and stick by it, especially in an artistic position.***
>
> — Gillian Taylor, owner of Snaffle and Mane

Snaffle and Mane owner Gillian Taylor pictured in her freshly renovated floral shop. /ADAM FRISK staff

"I'm exhausted," Taylor laughed, reflecting on swapping vacation for renovation in a recent interview. "I needed a holiday. I was supposed to be in Vietnam for two weeks. Instead, I renovated my shop."

Since opening its doors, Snaffle and Mane has carved out a distinct niche in the local market by skipping the standard "grocery store" bouquets made up of carnations or Gerber daisies, and offering unique, high-end florals and a curated selection of plants.

"Am I for everybody? No," Taylor admitted. "I've had to learn to say no sometimes. You have to have a vision and stick by it, especially in an artistic position. I think people in Haliburton appreciate having something a little different and elevated."

That commitment to a specific aesthetic, paired with a relentless focus on customer service, often handling client correspondence at all hours of the day, has built a "huge regular following" that has sustained the shop through its first three years.

As for the recent renovation, it wasn't just about slapping some fresh paint on the walls and moving a couch; the shop owner redesigned the space to prioritize efficiency and "flow." Something that 20-plus years in the restaurant management industry had taught her.

"I really enjoy efficiency," Taylor said. "The new space allows me to keep the workspace private while maintaining a hospitality-focused storefront. It's about having a system where things find their home."

She said the layout had already paid off. Processing a large shipment for Valentine's Day would normally take Taylor three hours to prepare and take care of, now it takes just one. The renovation also introduced a large, custom-built workbench designed to host future floral and plant workshops.

The name of the flower shop often draws curiosity. A self-described "horse person," Taylor said the name was derived from her equestrian background, but chose it specifically because it didn't box her in.

"It keeps the name open," she explained. "If I decided tomorrow I wanted to sell sneakers, I could. It's not 'Flowers R Us.' It leaves things open-ended."

While she isn't planning on switching to selling kicks anytime soon, Taylor remains connected to the emotional aspect of her craft. She reflected on a particular highlight of her first three years of creating a bouquet for a client to give to someone nearing the end of their life.

"Just the idea that these were going to be like the last flowers that they were going to have in their house," Taylor said before pausing for a moment. "I wanted to make them extra special and really take my time to make something beautiful."

As Snaffle and Mane enters its fourth year, Taylor has her sights on settling into the new space and perhaps getting that well-deserved vacation.

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2 bedroom/1 bedroom + sitting room, upper floor apartment, non-smoker. Located in rural area between Haliburton and Minden. Fridge and stove, partially furnished. Rent is $750, including utilities, with 1st and last month's rent required. Applicants must have a full time job or pension and provide references. Please contact: jimdeitz50@gmail.com

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Community Events

Send your event listing to classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

Recurring events

TOPS: Take Off Pounds Sensibly
When: Monday mornings 9:30 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion Branch 129, upper level
Admission: Yearly membership of $59
A non-profit/commercial network of weight-loss support groups, offers programs for healthy living and weight management.

Bridge for Seniors
When: Mondays at 1 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Schofield Room
All welcome

Haliburton Legion Walking Group
When: Mondays at 9 to 10 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
A safe walking environment. Lead by an Occupational therapist.

Free Balanced Fitness and Active Social Senior Classes
When: Every second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 10 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
All seniors are welcome. Group led by Registered Recreation Therapist

Bid Euchre
When: Wednesdays at 1 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
All welcome!

Duplicate Bridge - Please arrange for a partner.
When: Wednesdays at 12:45 at Park Lane Apartments. Fridays at 12:45 at Haliburton Legion, Schofield Room.

Cards/Euchre/Cribbage
When: Thursdays at 2:30 p.m.
Where: St. George's Church
617 Mountain Street

Monthly Community Breakfast
When: Fourth Saturday of Every Month from 9-11am
Where: Fellowship Room, Haliburton United Church, 10 George St. Haliburton
Hosted by North Entrance Masonic Lodge and Haliburton United Church. This welcoming event is intended to bring together members of the community for good food and fellowship. There is no fixed cost for attending the breakfast. Donations are warmly welcomed and will be put to meaningful use supporting local initiatives. A portion of the proceeds collected from the breakfast will be donated to the Public School Breakfast Program in Haliburton County, helping to ensure that local students start their day with a nutritious meal.

Lakeside Church Service
When: Sunday at 9 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.
Where: 9 Park Street, Haliburton.
Whoever you are, wherever you've been, you are welcome here.

Weekly Meat Rolls
When: Every Saturday, 3 p.m.
Where: Coboconk Legion, Hwy 48 and 35
Join us for our weekly meat draw at the Coboconk Legion. Five spins for $10. The first four rounds are for highest and lowest score with two winners per round. The last round is for a prepare-it-yourself dinner for two. Additional spins for this round are available for $2 each. Call 705-454-8127 or email info@coboconklegion.ca for more information.

Friends of the Haliburton County Public Library New Book Nook Hours
When: 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month - 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Where: Minden Hills Branch, 176 Bobcaygeon Rd. Minden
We welcome you to visit our Book Nook! Choose from a variety of gently read books: thrillers, mysteries, romance, biographies, children and youth selections, Canadian authors, fiction, science fiction/fantasy, sports, spiritual and other non-fiction books. Bring a reusable bag. Payment is by cash donation. All money raised by the Friends of the Haliburton County Public Library supports library enhancements and programmes for all libraries in the county.

Events by date

Genealogy for Seniors
When: Wednesday, February 18 from 1-2pm at the Gooderham Library or 3pm at the Wilberforce Library
Curious about where you come from? Join us for an inspiring introduction to family history research led by Adele Espina of the Haliburton Highlands Genealogy Group, with support provided by the Government of Ontario. This workshop will walk you through the steps of building your family tree—from locating historical records to organizing your research and uncovering stories from your past.

SALC Needle Felting Chocolate-Covered Strawberries
When: Thursday, February 19 from 2-3pm
Where: Dysart Library (Haliburton Village)
In this free, hands-on workshop, you'll learn how to needle-felt a strawberry. All materials provided. Offered in partnership with the Government of Ontario, supporting social connection, creativity, and well-being among older adults in our community. Registration required. Call 705-457-2241 or email programs@haliburtonlibrary.ca to register.

Tech Help Walk-in-Clinic
When: Friday, February 20 from 10am-12pm
Where: Wilberforce Library
Stuck on a tech problem? First come, first served. Each person gets a 30-minute session with library staff to tackle one specific technology challenge. One session per person per day.

Local Service Directory

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THE HALIBURTON COUNTY
ECHO
The Voice Of The Highlands Since 1882

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Spending cuts not likely to be deep at board of education

by PETER DOWNS
Staff Reporter

Haliburton school trustees have to shave just .5 per cent from their draft budget to give the province what it wants — no tax hike for the board's final year in power.

As Queen's Park prepares to chop the number of school boards in half and take over education funding, Education Minister John Snobelen has very clearly directed boards not to bump up their levies.

The board has also been told unofficially to expect the same level of provincial funding this year as it received in 1996.

That means Haliburton trustees will have to trim the board's preliminary budget of $17.32-million by about $88,000, or half a per cent, to bring it down to last year's spending level of $17.23-million.

"Basically, we're on a holding pattern right now," said the board's business administrator, Jim Bradley.

Unlike last year, parents and students shouldn't see any dramatic changes because of board cost-cutting measures for the year ahead.

The preliminary budget indicates estimated spending based on existing demands and includes funding requests from each school for capital expenditures and maintenance.

Trustees will likely look to those funding requests to find the small savings they need to come up with a zero increase in their final budget.

But until it gets official word from the province that its transfer payments will be held at the same level, the board doesn't plan on making any cuts.

"We've only been told these things. We haven't received anything in writing. So we're going sit and wait right now until we see what our grant structure is and go from there," Bradley said.

Since this is the last time trustees will have control over how money is spent on education in Haliburton County, this is "probably our most important budget," said chairwoman Cheryl Murdoch.

Before the board is dismantled, she said it's important that trustees do all they can with the resources they have to put the school system in the best position possible before it is merged with the boards of Muskoka and Victoria County.

But Dysart trustee Len Salvatori noted the board has little room to make any significant changes.

"This year we can't really commit to anything. We can't go above zero (per cent expenditure increase)," he said. "...

See PROVINCE page 4

The C word:

County council reacts angrily to Snowdon's threat to call in the Commissioner

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

Snowdon Reeve George Simmons was strongly chastized by fellow county councillors for suggesting that his municipality may call in a provincial commissioner to overall the local political structure.

"It's too premature to talk about bringing anyone in," said Warden Murray Fearrey. The county and its 10 municipalities have started a process of re-organizing themselves from within, and Simmons hasn't given this process a chance to succeed, he said.

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HOLD ON: There were screams and laughter as family enjoyed all the winter fun at Camp Wanakita on Sunday. Tobogganning down Cardiac Hill was as popular as ever.

Barber report gets good marks from county council

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

County councillors gave their unanimous approval to adopt David Barber's draft report on spending efficiencies.

Municipal councils still have two weeks to comment on the report before it's accepted in its final form, but the general reaction at Wednesday's county council meeting was positive. There are questions about some of those figures, but consultant David Barber will resolve many of the problems in his final report due after the March 3 deadline for comments.

Warden Murray Fearrey was the most outspoken defender of the report, which sets benchmarks for per household spending on various municipal services in the county.

"This is an action plan (and I want county council) to accept it in principle and seriously look at making it work," he said in what was at times an angry response to criticism of the report. "The numbers may never be perfect but they indicate trends to work towards. Let's put personalities aside and get this resolved."

Fearrey also made a dig at municipal employees, primarily roads superintendents, who have disagreed with some of Barber's figures and calculations. "I don't think staff has the will (to implement) this, but they must work with the councils" and councils must take a leadership role.

The Barber report compares spending levels in each municipality and calculates a per household cost of services. Barber sets a spending level slightly higher than the lowest cost for each service as benchmarks for municipalities to strive towards.

In the current edition of Municipal World magazine, there's a three-page article on amalgamation. The author says amalgamation has never saved money and had favourable comments about using benchmarks.

Addressing council on Wednesday, Barber said many other counties have expressed interest in his study and asked for copies of the report, leading Cardiff Deputy-reeve Doug Holman to joke that if Barber gets more business because of

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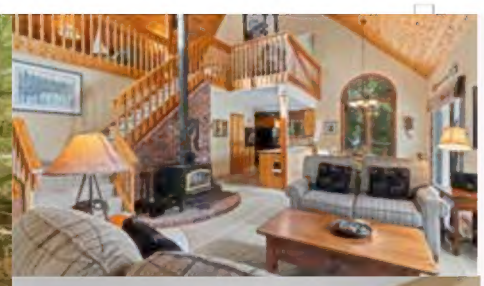

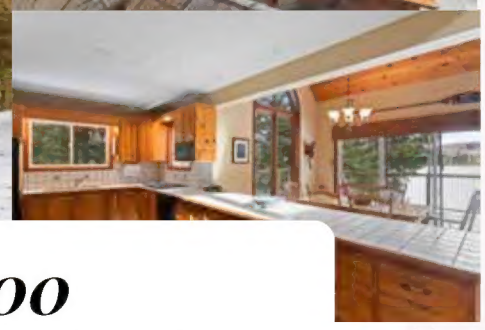

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